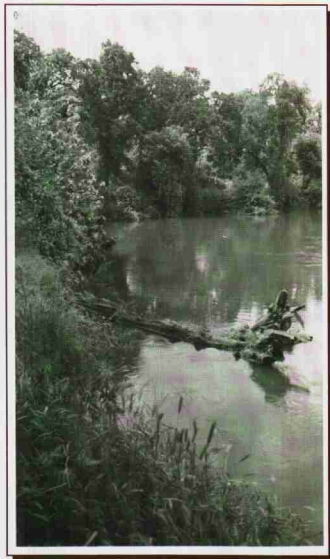


Caswell Memorial State Park



Welcome to Caswell Memorial State Park, a small, wild refuge in the midst of the Great Central Valley of California. Located six miles southwest of Ripon, this unique state park protects one of the last remaining oak-riparian woodlands that once flourished throughout the valley.

The Stanislaus River meanders through the park, with beaches and swimming areas near the park's day-use and campground facilities. Valley temperatures reach the high 90s in the summer, but the park's shaded camp and picnic areas are often 10 degrees cooler. Family and group picnic facilities with tables and stoves are available. Because of the extreme fire hazard, fires are permitted only in the stoves provided.

Fishing is popular here, because many species thrive in the slow-moving, muddy-bottom river. Some of the fish species were introduced from the eastern United States in years past. Summertime fishing yields largemouth, smallmouth and striped bass, bullhead, sturgeon, bluegill, catfish, shad, and buffalo carp. Check with the Ranger about fishing seasons and regulations.

Along the rivers there is a strip of bottom-land, countersunk beneath the general level, and wider toward the foot-hills, where magnificent oaks, from three to eight feet in diameter, cast grateful masses of shade over the open, prairie-like levels. And close along the water's edge there was a fine jungle of tropical luxuriance, composed of wild-rose and bramble bushes and a great variety of climbing vines, wreathing and interlacing the branches and trunks of willows and alders, and swinging across from summit to summit in heavy festoons.

John Muir
from *The Mountains of California*



San Joaquin Valley Woodrat

Photo: B. Moore, Peterson/WBP

Natural History

Oak Woodland

As you visit the park today, imagine the vast hardwood forest that once covered much of the Central Valley's river banks and flood plains. The Caswell family protected the stand of valley oak you see today, which is just a remnant a much larger forest. Demand for firewood and efforts to clear the land for agriculture in the past years reduced the virgin forest to a few isolated stands. Some of the groves protected in the park contain trees more than 60 feet high, with girths of more than 17 feet. These valley oaks are the largest species of oak in the United States.

Low shrubs and herbs flourish in the shade below, dropping their leaves to form a ground cover of dead vegetation that decays into rich soil. Insects, spiders, reptiles, birds, and small mammals find abundant food and many hiding places that are essential for survival. These creatures are a food source to predators from surrounding areas. Valley oaks produce long, slender acorns as their seeds. Many insects, birds, and mammals depend on these acorns for their main food supply. Early valley Indians also used the high food value of the acorns—after leaching out the bitter tannins. Acorn

California State Park Information

For information about State Park hours of operation, fees, annual passes or specific park regulations, you may contact your nearest State Park. Please check the front of your telephone directory under State Government, Department of Parks and Recreation.

For general State Park information, contact the Public Affairs Office at P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001 or call (916)653-6995.

For camping reservations call MISTIX at (800)444-7275.

For a catalog of State Park merchandise or for a listing of all State Park publications and videos, write to California State Park Store, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, CA 94296-0001 or call (916)653-4000.



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

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CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

woodpeckers are busy in the fall, collecting acorns and packing them into holes that they have excavated in tree trunks. The woodpeckers, jays, and crows will return to these acorn "granaries" to eat both the acorns and the insects that are feeding on them.

Outside the oak forest, a wide variety of plant life flourishes, including wild roses, wild currant, and rambling blackberry.

Riparian Woodland

One of the rarest habitats in California is riparian woodland. The term "riparian" is used for vegetation or habitat that exists along rivers and streams (Riparus is Latin, meaning "at the river"). Water reclamation and flood control efforts have devastated these riverland ecosystems that depend on the flow of water. With a constant supply of water at or near the surface, riparian vegetation thrives. Riparian woodlands can develop canopies similar to tropical forests, with a tall overstory of trees and an understory of shrubs, herbs, and hanging vines. Such thick and diverse vegetation supports equally diverse animal life.

The tallest trees enjoying this wet habitat are Fremont cottonwoods. These cottonwoods (also called poplars) lose their broad, heart-shaped leaves during the winter. Willows are also common in the riparian area, growing in several species and taking several forms, from robust shrubs to tall trees. All willows are deciduous, losing their long, slender leaves in the winter, making it easier to view wildlife. Dense growth of willow along the shores of the river provides excellent feeding, nesting, and hiding places for many species of small birds. Other riparian plant species include box-elder, Oregon ash, elderberry, and white alder.

With the loss of riparian habitat, the riparian brush rabbit has become endangered, and the riparian woodrat is considered rare. These species are both protected along with all the natural features at Caswell Memorial State Park.

Trails

Several trails wind through fine stands of valley oak and along the Stanislaus River, where a tangle of undergrowth provides protection and food for wildlife such as opossum, skunk, raccoon, fox, rabbit, and muskrat. These creatures are all very secretive, so you may only see evidence of them, such as scat (feces) and tracks (pawprints).

History

The Native Americans who lived along this river and collected acorns among these ancient groves were Yokuts. In the early 1800s, Spanish explorers traversed this area, and fur trappers found the river bountiful. It was near here, in 1829, that a famous battle took place between Mexican soldiers and a band of Indians led by a former neophyte of Mission San Jose named Estanislao. From the time of this famous battle until the American occupation, the river was known as "Rio de Estanislao," in honor of the brave chieftain. The name Stanislaus is taken from this historic figure, whose Christian name is Spanish for Stanislaus.

In the 1860s, the federal government sold portions of what is today Caswell Memorial State Park to the Pope family, to be used as ranch land. In 1915, the Papes in turn sold the land to Thomas Caswell, whose family developed it for farming. Thomas enjoyed this wonderful forest and felt it should be preserved. Realizing the significance and beauty of this special place, in 1950, his children and grandchildren donated 134 acres to the people of California. In later years, the state purchased adjacent land and local organizations made additional contributions, to bring it to its present 258 acres. Caswell Memorial State Park opened to the public in 1958.



Camping

In a pleasant, wooded area beside the river, there are 65 family campsites, each with a table, camp stove, and food locker. Drinking water taps and comfort stations with hot showers are nearby. The sites will accommodate trailers up to 21 feet long, or motorhomes up to 24 feet. Hookups are not available.

The group campground will accommodate tent camping for up to 50 people, though it may be flooded in spring.

Reservations for family campsites can be made by phone up to eight weeks (56 days) in advance, by calling MISTIX at 1-800-444-7275. Reservations can be charged to a credit card. Group camp reservations can be made up to 26 weeks (180 days) in advance.

Thousands of people enjoy camping and day use at Caswell Memorial State Park every year. The park staff is dedicated to providing a high-quality recreational experience for you, your family, and generations to come. You help preserve the natural resources of this park when you follow the rules to ensure a safe and enjoyable visit for everyone.

Please Remember

- Dogs must be kept on leash, and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night. There is an additional charge for each dog that you bring into the park.
- Wood gathering is prohibited. All park resources, including plants and animals, are fully protected by law.
- Quiet hours are 10 p.m. until 8 a.m. Generators may be operated between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. only.
- Park only in the areas indicated, and observe speed limits.
- Motorcycles are allowed only on the roads.
- Boats are not allowed within 100 feet of the swimming area.

We'd like to hear from you! If park facilities need attention, or if you feel that there is some way we could better serve your needs, please contact any staff member. Enjoy your visit!

Caswell Memorial State Park
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(209) 599-3810

*This brochure was made possible by
Four Rivers Natural History Association*

Four Rivers



*Natural
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Caswell Memorial State Park

To Manteca, Ripon & Highway 99

- TRAILS
- ▲ CAMPGROUND
- ▲▲ GROUP CAMPGROUND
- ▲ PICNIC AREA
- ▲▲ GROUP PICNIC AREA
- RESTROOMS
- ◻ RESTROOMS WITH SHOWERS
- ➡ SWIMMING AREA (No Boats)

